

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4452

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USAEC GERMANTOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EALR, TECH, ENRG, AS, JA

SUBJ: ATOMIC ENERGY: AUSTRALIANS AND JAPANESE TALK ABOUT
URANIUM EXPORTS AND ENRICHMENT

REF: (A) CANBERRA 7286 (NOTAL)

(B) TOKYO 14319 (NOTAL)

(C) CANBERRA 7198 (NOTAL)

(D) STATE 239361 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: DURING RECENT CANBERRA VISIT OF JAPANESE PRIME
MINISTER TANAKA (REF A), AUSTRALIANS AND JAPANESE HELD SIGNIFICANT
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DISCUSSIONS ON URANIUM EXPORTS AND DECIDED TO STUDY JOINTLY

POSSIBLE URANIUM ENRICHMENT IN AUSTRALIA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN JOINT PRESS STATEMENT, GOA CONFIRMED IT WILL EXPORT 9,000 SHORT TONS OF URANIUM (YELLOWCAKE) TO JAPAN BETWEEN 1976 AND 1986 UNDER CONTRACTS APPROVED BY PREVIOUS GOA. AUSTRALIA WILL ALSO CONSIDER MEETING INCREASED JAPANESE REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN 1986 AND 2000, ALTHOUGH IT MADE NO HARD COMMITMENT ON PRICES, AMOUNTS, SCHEDULE OR STATE (ENRICHED, URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE OR YELLOWCAKE).

3. JAPAN WILL CONDUCT A JOINT FEASIBILITY STUDY WITH AUSTRALIA ON POSSIBILITY OF URANIUM ENRICHMENT IN AUSTRALIA WHICH, IN PRINCIPLE, JAPAN FAVORS. STUDY WILL INCLUDE CAPITAL, SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY FROM THIRD COUNTRIES AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

4. IN NOVEMBER 2 PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH ALSO COVERED COAL (SEPTTEL), MINERALS AND ENERGY MINISTER CONNOR PROVIDED FURTHER BACKGROUND ON URANIUM. GOA-GOJ JOINT FEASIBILITY STUDY, WHICH WILL BE COMPLETED BY 1978, SUBSUMES GOA STUDY OF POSSIBLE ENRICHMENT PLANT SITED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WHICH HE ANNOUNCED LAST MAY. WITHOUT PREJUDGING SELECTION OF ENRICHMENT TECHNOLOGY HE AGAIN MANIFESTED STRONG LEANING TOWARD GAS CENTRIFUGE. HE WAS CONFIDENT ENRICHMENT WOULD BE PROFITABLE FOR AUSTRALIA, AND THAT JAPAN WILL PAY NECESSARY COST. HE SUGGESTED THAT AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS WILL DIMINISH IN IMPORTANCE AS MINERALS ZOOM, AND STRESSED THAT JAPAN WILL HAVE FIRST CALL ON AUSTRALIAN URANIUM.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: THESE DEVELOPMENTS DOVETAIL WITH CONNOR'S OCTOBER 31 POLICY STATEMENTS (REF C), WHICH PAVED WAY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S URANIUM RESERVES. JAPANESE AGREEMENT TO JOIN IN ENRICHMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY REVERSES GOJ REJECTION OF CONNOR'S SIMILAR PROPOSAL IN TOKYO DURING OCTOBER, 1973 MINISTERIAL TALKS. RECEPTIVE GOJ ATTITUDE UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HEIGHTENED JAPANESE DESIRE TO DIVERSIFY THEIR SOURCES OF ENRICHED URANIUM RECENTLY REPORTED BY EMBASSY TOKYO (REF B). CONNOR MAY BE CORRECT IN BELIEVING TALKS MARK IMPORTANT NEW PHASE IN COORDINATING THE TWO ECONOMIES OVER LONGER TERM.

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